

## Harvest Thanksgiving

*Psalm 67; John 6:25-35*

### Talk 1

In 1913 Eleanor H Porter wrote a book about a young girl called Pollyanna. Pollyanna went to live with her sour-tempered aunt after her father's death, and things were not good. However, Pollyanna's sunny nature and good humour proved to have an astonishing effect on all around her, and the story is a wonderful tale of how cheerfulness and light can conquer adversity and darkness.

Pollyanna's philosophy of life centres on what she calls, "*The Glad Game*", an optimistic attitude she learned from her father. The game consists of finding something to be glad about in every situation. It originated in an incident one Christmas when Pollyanna, who was hoping for a doll, found only a pair of crutches in a lucky-dip 'missionary barrel'. Making the game up on the spot, Pollyanna's father taught her to look on the bright side of things – in this case, to be glad about the crutches because, "we didn't need to use them!" With this philosophy, and her sunny personality and sincere, sympathetic soul, Pollyanna brings so much gladness to her aunt's dispirited New England town that she transforms it into a pleasant place to live. The book shines with the girl's gladness as one miserable soul after another is transformed. No one is immune for long. Soon the whole town begins to shine with kindness, hopefulness and love.

Harvest Thanksgiving is a service we have each year where we have the opportunity to say thank you to God for the goodness of the earth. Though our planet faces serious challenges through global warming, drought and humanity's mismanagement of earth's resources, yet there is still cause to be thankful for the fact that when we do care for the earth, it cares for us right back.

Harvest Thanksgiving allows us to say 'thank you' for so many different things in the world today.

I wonder, what are you thankful for now?

(Invite children to come forward with their thanks)

## Talk 2

Ruth Harvey, who is the leader of the Iona Community writes about the sea-shore flower called Thrift. The Thrift is a tender, strong spark of pink that clings to the edge of the Earth.

This sea-sprayed flower is usually found on the margins, at beaches or on cliffs. Thrift thrives between the shadow of cliff and the spectre of ocean – inhabiting that liminal shoreline space between dry land and vast water. Cliff and ocean compared to the tiny thrift could overwhelm.

In fact for this flower they offer a wing, a shelter, a refuge. This is a plant that clings on, that digs in. The tenacity of thrift holding her delight up to us as an inspiration from the Earth to all who are on the margins, who live in fear of being overshadowed or engulfed.

A poet writes: 'Thrift knows hardship is a limit not a failing; Thrift persists despite all odds, and Thrift's gift is – Thrift's grace is – to give a glimpse of hope in the tightest of spots, the toughest of places.'

For Thrift to thrive the balance found in the symbiotic relationship between ocean and cliff, between shelter and vulnerability must be tenderly nurtured.<sup>i</sup>

It's a wonderful image, reminding us that life is very often fragile on earth, either it's ecology; or its people. Or our well-being; or our plans for the future. But earth, properly looked after, will always respond well. People, properly looked after, will always respond well. And for that we should be thankful. For that, as Psalm 67 encourages, we should praise God Who has blessed us.

As we support the work of South East Edinburgh Foodbank this year, we are reminded that there are people in our community and living near our community who are facing one of the toughest times ever because of the state of the economy and because of the threat of fuel poverty, amongst many other things.

In the face of overwhelming odds – how do we work together to offer to support to one another; realising that sometimes we can be the ones who help, and sometimes we are the ones who need help. Sometimes it is those who have least who can teach us about how to be economical, and how to be generous, even with the little they have.

It is a blessing to be able to give, and it is also a blessing to be able to receive. Something that we, as grown-ups, need to remember. When it comes to God, we can never out-give God, we should receive graciously, as well as give what we can when we can.

One of the blessings we should be thankful for at Harvest is the community of the Church. We're not a secret club only for those and such as those. We remain a body of children, women and men that want to be able to use the many gifts and skills and talents, and the great love and hope that we still have, to make the world a better place.

We're a group of people who come together with our hopes and our fears, our faith and our doubts, finding that through services like this on Sunday, we are not alone, that there is room for us, and that if we have questions, and if we have a hunger to help others, and to be help ourselves, then here is a place where we can think, and ask, and wonder, and do things, and be helped ourselves.

Jesus likens it to receiving the bread of life. It's not something that we can make, or taste, but it is something in the atmosphere here that we can sense, and think about, and believe in, and accept.

Maybe you are hungry and thirsty for hope.

Maybe you are hungry and thirsty for forgiveness.

Maybe you are hungry and thirsty for rest.

Maybe you are hungry and thirsty for acceptance.

Maybe you are hungry and thirsty for things to do to help.

Maybe you are hungry and thirsty for friendship.

Maybe you are hungry and thirsty for peace.

Maybe you are hungry and thirsty for love.

In amidst the gifts of harvest, and the things you may have brought to give and to share, accept these gifts that God wants to give to you today. And this Harvest Thanksgiving, be thankful.

**In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**

**Amen**

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<sup>i</sup> Ruth Harvey, Church of Scotland Weekly Worship, Eco Congregation, Season of Creation, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022